

after my first literary success was it republished with my name.

"Aziyadé is now dead. But where she lies I know, and on each of my trips to the East I pay a visit to her grave."

Our Western view of the benefit occidental ideas are bound to work among the Turkish women is not shared by Monsieur Loti.

"Since my first coming to the Orient," he continued,—"that is to say in 1867,—the Turkish women have felt more and more the influence of European ideals. They have already begun among the more exclusive social levels to employ French and sometimes German governesses. Books are being read by them, the Paris fashions are being scanned regularly, and I have been astonished within the present year to receive from Turkish women letters that discuss the most modern subjects.

"It was earlier correspondence with Turkish women disclosing the spread of the new ideas that induced me to take another trip to the East and to study the con-

dition of women there more deeply. Then I wrote 'Disenchanted.' Though in the form of a novel, there is much truth in the book.

"It cannot be denied that the quickening of the minds and sensibilities that has come to Turkish women with the absorption of occidental opinions has thrown open for them many new sources of pain and difficulty. This, however, is a crisis among women of the élite. The great body of the Turkish people remain true in their devotion to the past."

"You are credited, Monsieur Loti, with having elected the Turkish women to the highest place in your regard next after Frenchwomen. For what qualities do you most admire these cloistered women?"

"For their beauty and impenetrability," came the answer. "It is like no charm elsewhere than in the Orient. The beauty of their eyes is a languid beauty that sleeps and waits to be awakened. For the rest, I

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his way, contemptuous of further controversy—if the one-sided colloquy could be so called—or possibly because he knew his man. It was neither safe nor healthy to push Shark Gascoigne too far. But the giant beachcomber was too surprised to feel resentment.

"H'm! Seems real r'iled, Joe does. Now what did he mean by all that palaver? Why shouldn't the Belle port or pass safe? What's all this muck about the Mindora, anyway?" The trainmen had spoken of crooked work on the beach; but he had not believed them: he knew they were worse gossips than old women. Anyway, he had never been implicated in anything but what he regarded as the legitimate despoiling of the sea's offerings, and he took what he got at the risk of his life.

He disdained to ask Bronson for information. That would come soon enough—and if any of the beach gang were in it, he would find it out, or know the reason why! For the moment he threw the thing aside, as he did all things that perplexed without annoying him. He gave the short laugh that was more nearly an index to the man's reckless character than anything else could be, and turned in at the cottage gate.

WHAT passed between Shark Gascoigne and the one person in Barnegat who thoroughly admired the "bravery and heroism of coastwise sailors and boatmen" in general, and a certain brawny, laughing, broad-shouldered one in particular, does not matter. From that interview Gascoigne departed with certain well defined notions of the upright principles governing a clean-minded girl like Ruth Mallory,—maybe slender in her knowledge of men and conditions, but a very Rock of Gibraltar in the morality of the ages.

Shark Gascoigne felt as if he had been to church. The young woman's standards of honor accorded ill with his own nefarious calling, and the realization depressed him in a way he would have scoffed at a short time before—when he was dealing with his "ship chandlery agent" up in the city, for instance. He had a cold feeling that he had lost something he should never get back, something he could never square, and for the moment remorse gripped him in both hands.

"She's right, all right! It's better to run straight, so's ye can look folks in the eyes without havin' to crack 'em there right after. She thinks sailors are the greatest ever—specially coastwise boatmen 'that battle with the sea, an' life savers, savin' wrecked sailormen at imminent peril of—' your grandmother!'"

As he swung down to the bay, passing Pop Evans' tavern, a group of boisterous baymen shouted to him to join them. Ordinarily he would have accepted with avidity, and outcried the lot: now he replied by a shake of the head, like an absorbed mastiff shaking off an irritation, and passed on out of sight over the trestle that spanned the water from the mainland.

AT the end of the trestle lay his objective, the small white buildings of the Ships Bottom Life Saving Station, and back stretching for twenty miles north and south the narrow strip of sepia sand, the wrecking beach of the "Atlantic Graveyard" that served as breakwater for the whole extent of Barnegat Bay.

Dusk was falling; but Gascoigne noticed that the fishing fleet was at anchor in the bay. There would be no cast that night: the three-days' levanter had not yet blown itself out. The boom of the surf ahead was a continuous rumble; not the usual broken, sleepy wash.

"Must a been coarse work in that Mindora take-off. Big Jem Casco ain't in the habit o' gettin' stove up for nothing. Say he's busted some ribs and the motorboat's smashed," the beachcomber speculated uneasily. He glanced at the sky. The storm riders were out, imminent presage of another wild night such as the preced-

THE BEACHCOMBER

Drawings by George Wright

BY S. TEN EYCK BOURKE AND
CHARLES FRANCIS BOURKE

IN TWO PARTS—PART I.



SHARK GASCOIGNE, beachcomber and Barnegat bayman, sprang catlike from the moving car, before the shuttle train with its one passenger coach and baggage car came gasping to a halt at the little Barnegat station, the terminus of the branch shore line. He stretched his huge limbs and drew in a deep breath, inhaling the bitter cold wind that swept over the sand dunes of Barnegat Bay, with all the enjoyment of a diver coming up from deep water.

"Woof! That's good," he said, "after that confounded stuffy old New York. Two days in that burg's more'n enough for any man."

Full lunged, Shark Gascoigne was. He was buttoning his heavy peajacket over his massive chest, more as a precaution against a thick wallet he carried in his breast pocket than as protection against the bleak afternoon wind, when voices reached him from the group of railroad men gossiping at the door of the baggage car. He listened for a moment unnoticed and uninterested, then with eager attention, to the talk of the trainmen.

"Crooked work somewheres about that Mindora wreck las' night, the life savers say," the conductor was saying. "Lot o' their men hurt. She went smack on the Gridiron reef. Loaded with salt, she was, and you know what salt does when the water hits it—million tons o' sinkin'. There won't be much for the underwriters to take over, even if they beat the beachcombers to her. We're in for another blow tonight too."

"Her crew's over at Ships Bottom Station, all stove up, so Joe Bronson said when he come over to send the Wash'ton report," the station master remarked. "The bullies seem to a got it all round."

"That was the salt bark Mindora, wasn't it—due up yesterday from Turks Island?" Shark Gascoigne, forgetting for a moment his doubtful standing in the community, strode forward eagerly. He was interested in wrecks, more particularly this one, from what he had just heard.

There was silence. Then someone gave a mirthless laugh. "The beachcombers won't get much out o' her, if they did fetch her in. 'Ware sharks!'"

A laugh followed; then silence again, with the bleak wind whistling up through the elms in the Old Pirates' Cemetery on the hill beyond the station.

GASCOIGNE stood for a moment with clenched fists, then with a shrug strode away. He was a little surprised at his reception. It was not usual. Beachcomber he was, one who made his living out of wrecks, hero of a hundred beachcombing exploits, and well known to all Barnegat. But whether or not he deserved his nickname, he had not hitherto become a pariah, like other beach wolves who battered on the bones of dead ships, before the licensed wreckers took charge, looting them of cordage and cargo, when no man knew when those bones might disappear forever in the deep.

As the massive figure crossed the platform and strode up the road, with something about it solitary and aloof, the station agent voiced the general opinion of Shark Gascoigne in Barnegat:

"Pity he didn't stick to his fishing, and him with the best sloop in Barnegat, place o' forgathering with them confounded beachcombers—specially now! That young fellow'd make a crackjack at any sea or surf work—on'y somehow his morals seem to go crooked w'en there's beachwork on."

Shark Gascoigne contemptuously dismissed the whole matter as he strode up the main street of the village. "Railroad Johnnies! That's what talks!" he said, slapping the wallet on his broad chest. Nevertheless he was instinctively conscious of something in the wind he had not yet smelt out, something out of the ordinary that might yet concern him intimately.

The impression grew on him as he turned from the

main street toward the gate of a little ivy-covered cottage. He hesitated a moment, gave the same careless shrug, and swung the gate.

"At least she doesn't know I'm chief of all the beach devils," he said, unconscious of the incongruity. "If the women tell her, she won't believe it. If the men—" A grim set of his jaw finished the sentence. "She"—that was Ruth Mallory—had been in Barnegat only a few weeks, and Shark Gascoigne was willing to take his chances with the next man. And, as Fate would have it, the next man was already on the scene.

SO it was, when Life Saver Joe Bronson of Ships Bottom Station bade farewell to Miss Mallory,—a remarkably pretty girl in blue, who made a charming picture in the open front door (only spoiled by Bronson's proximity, as Gascoigne inwardly commented),—he came face to face with his own natural enemy and the most reckless and daring of all the professional foes of Ships Bottom Life Saving Station, the crack coast-guard corps on Barnegat Bay.

The two men eyed each other in silence, Gascoigne smiling, Bronson in entire disapproval. There was something about the sardonic grin of the beachcomber that r'iled Life Saver Bronson. He had intended to pass without a sign; but he yielded to a sudden impulse.

"I'll have a word with you, Shark Gascoigne, before you go in there!" Bronson blurted out. "She doesn't know what you are yet; but she will precious soon, unless you sheer off! An' I'll tell you another thing, Mr. Beachcomber Gascoigne!" Bronson went on in hot rage at Gascoigne's immovable smile. "Curfew's rung for you and your ship-smashing, man-killing kind, after that Mindora job last night. An' Ships Bottom's going to ring it with Winchesters. And what's more, Cap Casco told me to tell you that the Mystic Belle—and that's the Mindora's sister ship—is due up tonight. An' she'll pass or port safe—safe! See, Mr. Shark Gascoigne? And Cap'll take the master's report of shore lights at that."

Fully finished, Bronson swung on his heel and went



"Heaven Save the
Mystic Belle from
These Beach Devils!"



The Red-Capped Beachcomber Went Over Like a Log.

ing one had been. He felt curiously downcast. Only with an effort he thrust the mood from him. "Well, they got the old surfboat yet—if they got enough able-bodied men to jump her out," he said, making the best of a bad job.

That is just what Ships Bottom Life Station did not have. Even Shark Gascoigne himself, accustomed as he was to the hazard of the beach, was taken aback when he stopped at the wide-open door of the lifeboat house to take counsel with himself. He had come across the bay in a hot flush of resentment, determined to "have it out with the Ships Bottom bunch." He had his character to protect!

But now that he was on the ground he felt curiously embarrassed. There was an atmosphere of disaster about the place. Out of the boom of wind and sea, in the boathouse, he could hear the hum of voices in the adjoining station building.

He noticed too that the surfboat, resting on its broad-tired sand wagon beside him, was not in its usual orderly array, in which Ships Bottom, like all life savers, took pride—"Particular as women, mostly," he muttered.

Oarblades stuck over the gunnels of the boat, and in several places the looped lifelines were snapped and disconsolately trailing. "The bullies must have had a time last night," Gascoigne murmured to himself. "I never see such a mess."

As he stood there, mystified and doubtful, Little Welsh, gunfirer and bowman of the life droul, flung open the intervening door between boathouse and station, darted in, snatched up a length of signal line, and hurried out. Gascoigne knew what that meant. From inside the station came a man's ravings and sounds of a struggle. The beachcomber listened gloomily. He was not to blame for the consequence of shipwreck; but he had a curiously cold feeling round the heart,—an odd sensation for a man usually so reckless of consequences of any kind.

"One of them Mindora bullies has gone off his head—couldn't be the life bunch; they're tough—hours an' hours after he was reskied." He had seen that happen before on the beach. Still, he wasn't responsible.

IN that brief instant in the boathouse Welsh had recognized the lurking figure of the beachcomber, and reported. "Shark's outside mousin' round," he told Captain Casco. "Reckon he's come over to interview Joe, 'cordin' to invitation." Welsh grinned at Bronson, as well as he might for a badly bruised face, souvenir of the night's work.

Fully half the Ships Bottom crew were stove up. Some lay listlessly in their bunks, all in. And in the corner by the Vesuvius heater Captain Casco, with his arm bandaged to his side, talked to a little gray shipmaster, who fumbled an interminable bundle of ship's papers, the only precious salvage of the Mindora wreck, and tremblingly thanked Heaven he hadn't trusted his wife and baby on his own ship, because of its treacherous salt cargo, but had shipped them north on a brother Captain's ship, the Mystic Belle.

A sudden silence following Welsh's announcement made Casco turn to the door. The big life Captain's face went black when he saw Gascoigne standing defiantly in the entrance.

"You got my message?" Casco said, when the glances passed like swordthrusts. "You know the order that has gone out to clear the beach? What are you doing here, Shark Gascoigne? Come to see what you done?"

"That's what I come here to find out—what I ain't done." Somehow the cold feeling was still in Gascoigne's heart. He tried to fight it off. "What in thun-

der has happened, Jem? And what did Joe Bronson mean talkin' to me that way?"

Surfman Bronson, staring out of the window, swung round with a quick-drawn breath and took a step toward him. But Casco intervened.

"It ain't no time for that, Joe," the keeper said. "I know you wasn't in this Mindora job, Shark, that wrecked a ship and disabled half my crew. If I thought you knew anything about them hung-up lights—" The big life Captain heaved his great shoulders, stretching out his one sound arm in menace. "By the eternal—"

Gascoigne took a step farther into the room, where everyone around him was inimical. A sudden light broke upon him. "You mean to say, Jem Casco, that the Mindora was fetched in?"

"By lying lights—by false, lying channel lights, hung up on this red-painted coast, that was half a mile off the inlet, an' put me on the rocks when I tried to claw off against the inshore blow!" The master of the Mindora it was who struck in savagely, taking the words from Casco's mouth. "That, and a ship's riding lights, where there wasn't no ship anchored!" The little shipmaster swung his hands high, with a sort of scream. "Heaven save the Mystic Belle if them beach devils put up some game on her—with my missus and the pore little kiddy aboard!"

SHARK GASCOIGNE stood like a frozen man, staring into the messroom, where every other man scowled back murder at him. All his beachcombing experience piled in on him. He had run straight, never putting a ship or a sailor's life in jeopardy; but how about the others of his profession,—in jeopardy that the gaw, probably down shore now, waiting like wolves for helpless prey? All the subtle influences that had been working in him since he left the ivy cottage burst forth in a passionate protest as he realized his real standing with these heroes of the beach,—men who willingly gave their lives for nothing—or as nearly nothing as an ungrateful Government could secure them for, at a cost of keeping their bodies and souls together. Still, they willingly gave—while he looted!

"Fore God," he cried, "Jem Casco, I don't know the first thing about this job! You know I was away in York. You know I wouldn't take a hand in such a devil's job if that Mindora was loaded to her Plimsoll's with gold brick. I'm a wrecker; but I don't go in for man-killin' an' shipwreckin', an'—"

He stopped choking. The life savers looked down moodily. Big Casco turned away with a hopeless gesture. Only the little gray shipmaster stared at him with a dawning eagerness on his worn face. Suddenly he sprang up, catching the big beachcomber by the arm.

"If you're one of them, you won't let 'em hurt the Mystic Belle, will ye?" he pleaded. "My missus an' my little kiddy's aboard o' her. Most like she'll make port tonight. It's rousing again. Think o' the poor little kiddy out there in the dark—" The little man broke down sobbing.

From the life savers muttered the oaths supplemented the hysterical appeal. Some of the men turned over groaning, and Casco jerked a carbine from the wall, examining the mechanism with unnecessary care. The cold shame at a man's weakness that engenders reprisal was in the air.

Standing in the doorway, Gascoigne felt it, and drew a thick breath. He had done nothing; but if Casco had trained the carbine on him then and there he would have thought it but justice. He was a beachcomber; that is to say, one of those who broke down a man's manhood,—a parasite on industry, a sworn enemy to these men who held duty above gain, above interest, above life itself.

Even Joe Bronson had a right to despise the beachcomber—

"Three-sticker clawin' up shore, Jem! Looks to be too close in. Flyin' comp'ny colors, she is—"

The droned warning that came down from the lookout tower broke the tension. It was capped by the cry of the shipmaster.

"It's the Belle, sure! She's the on'y three-sticker northbound off the bay to-night."

The life savers, wounded and sound, piled outside into the driving spume and the cold of coming night. Captain Casco mounted the lookout tower.

BUT Shark Gascoigne, with wolves of remorse gnawing at his vitals, was working his way down shore against the bitter wind, making for the bluffs and the cove behind where he laid up his fishing sloop. Anything to get away from his thoughts and that man who cried! He hungered for action, hard and savage. He could have beaten the sands with a club and howled, as the men of the Stone Age howled and eased their feelings.

What cold rage was working in the beachcomber's heart he himself did not know. Mostly it was against himself and his ignoble if hazardous calling. Secondly, he meant to "pound the everlasting day-lights" out of the man who was instrumental in helping the Mindora ashore. Maybe the Mindora's master was only trying to save his own bacon. Still—

"A couple o' lamps thrown over the bluff would do it, or even a ship's riding lights showing above the sand. They taked 'em for anchor lights mostly, and come in an' snuggle up to crafts they think at anchor. Natur'ly they hit the reef or the beach."

He knew that Barnegat village itself, far not show a light on stormy nights, for fear of putting some groping craft on the dreaded reef.

He met the coastguard on duty,—Yankee Evans it was, wrapped in his oilskins, trudging back to the station,—but they passed without a word.

When he reached the cove where he kept his fishing sloop the anchorage was empty; but he glimpsed a twinkling masthead light down behind a narrow sand strip, and he plunged onward with an oath.

He found the boat nosing the sand on the bay side of the breakwater, and sprang aboard. Two or three gaudily dressed baymen lounged in the cockpit in the glare of the cabin lamp, and one burly fellow in red cap and sweater was just making fast the halyards of the masthead light. Passing over their shout of greeting, Gascoigne snatched the halyards from the bayman's hands and hauled down the light. Then he swung on the others.

"What you fellows doin' with my boat? What you runnin' that light up for, Braun?" he demanded, light-headed with rage.

A surprised growl answered him. The red-capped man said jeeringly, "Reckon we got a right to a ridin' light, ain't we? W'at's biting you tonight, Shark? City job go wrong?"

Gascoigne struggled to master himself. The changed position of the boat, the proximity of the adjacent bluffs, convenient for swinging over a couple of "lying lights," told him that which he dared not admit to himself. What was it the Mindora's master had said about false lights that deceived him?

While his brain whirled with conjecture, Braun went on in the same jeering tone, "Reckon we all ain't been idle sence you been gone, Shark. Leastwise, we ain't a goin' to be tonight. Did ye take note o' the old windjammer on the rocks—fast breakin' up—"

The man got no further. All the pent up fury and shame and terror in Gascoigne's brain burst forth in one inarticulate cry. He knew what these men had done, or contributed to. A word more of conviction would drive him mad. His big arm went back, and his iron fist went out blindly. It was as though he was beating down the words of his own condemnation. The red-capped beachcomber went over like a log, rolling among his companions.

They were all up and at him in a moment; but Gascoigne was insane with rage, endowed with the strength of ten men. When his brain finally cleared, the beachcombers had taken to the sands fleeing for their lives; all save Braun, still unconscious. Him Gascoigne dragged unceremoniously overboard and flung on the storm-swept beach.

INDEED, he had no time to minister to the man if he wanted to. While he stood breathing deeply of the acrid air that swirled round the sand dunes, blinding him with flying spume and spray, his brain smoke light with growing joy, now that he had finally and irrevocably broken with his fellows in evil-doing, he suddenly went taut in all his muscles, listening, straining his ears, with hard-pounding heart and tightly clenched fists.

That was the sound of a gun that came to him across wind, that or a heavy rocket, and as the thought crossed him a thin streak of fire vaulted heavenward. For a moment it lit up the black mounded illumination. The hurrying white storm riders,—the great "sheep" clouds of the coming storm. It curved and broke into myriad stars among the fleecy clouds, and Gascoigne gave a sharp cry of understanding.

"It's the ship! They're warning off that windjammer, the Mystic Belle—or was it her that struck I heard?"

To be concluded next Sunday

machinist was eager to get on in the world. He wanted to enlarge his machine shop; so he went to his friend the drug clerk, a German, who, by saving and inheritance, had about two thousand dollars. He wanted to get on too, and his goal was a drugstore of his own. The machinist knew of the savings, and essayed to borrow them, showing the drug clerk that in all probability he would be able to repay the two thousand within a reasonably short time once the shop was augmented in equipment. As a matter of friendship quite as much as a matter of business, the clerk did lend the money, and the shop was fitted out.

Then, after sometime, there came a day when the clerk thought he saw his way clearly to the purchase of a drugstore; so he applied to his friend the machinist for a return of the loan. Unfortunately (and there should be a question mark after this word) the machinist was not able to make repayment. He was doing fairly well, but could not afford to take two thousand dollars out of his business. The only thing he could do, he explained, was to offer the clerk an interest in the business to cover the loan.

"Give up the drug business for a time," he urged, "and come in with me until we can straighten matters. You don't know anything about machinery; so you take charge of the books. I'll do the machine end."

After much pondering, and then very reluctantly, the drug clerk took up the bookkeeping for the machine shop; and, although he worked long and diligently over it, he still clung to his first hope,—the drugstore with his name over the door. And he knew that the harder he worked and the more he accomplished the sooner would he be able to get back his little capital. It was not at all work to his liking, because he was a druggist, not a bookkeeper, and fate or fortune or luck, or whatever else one is pleased to call it, had forced him into an entirely different path in life.

As time went on, though, he became more and more interested in the success of the machine shop, which had grown to a size warranting the designation "works." He thought less and less of taking out his two thousand; the drugstore became a gray blur in the background. And now, to end the story rather abruptly, this former drug clerk is president of those same "works," which do

a business of more than a million dollars a year and are the largest of their kind in this country.

So much for the "luck" that drove a man into a business he didn't like and kept him there until he was a millionaire.

NOW, suppose that there is a Fairy Godmother who brings success to us, how does that enable one to write the formula of success? With the aforesaid godmother an acknowledged quantity, are we to suggest that people should sit around or stand around all alert for the touch of her wand? Put the Fairy Godmother down as the common denominator, and we'll have a world as idle as it is now busy. Then everyone would grow tired and yawn, and the good but ethereal lady would fly away in fright or disgust.

Suppose you had suggested to the floor manager that he wait for the fairy, that he keep his frock cloak nicely buttoned and his eyes brightly open and his ears alert for the faintest footfall. Do you know what he would have said? Well, precisely what has already been writ-

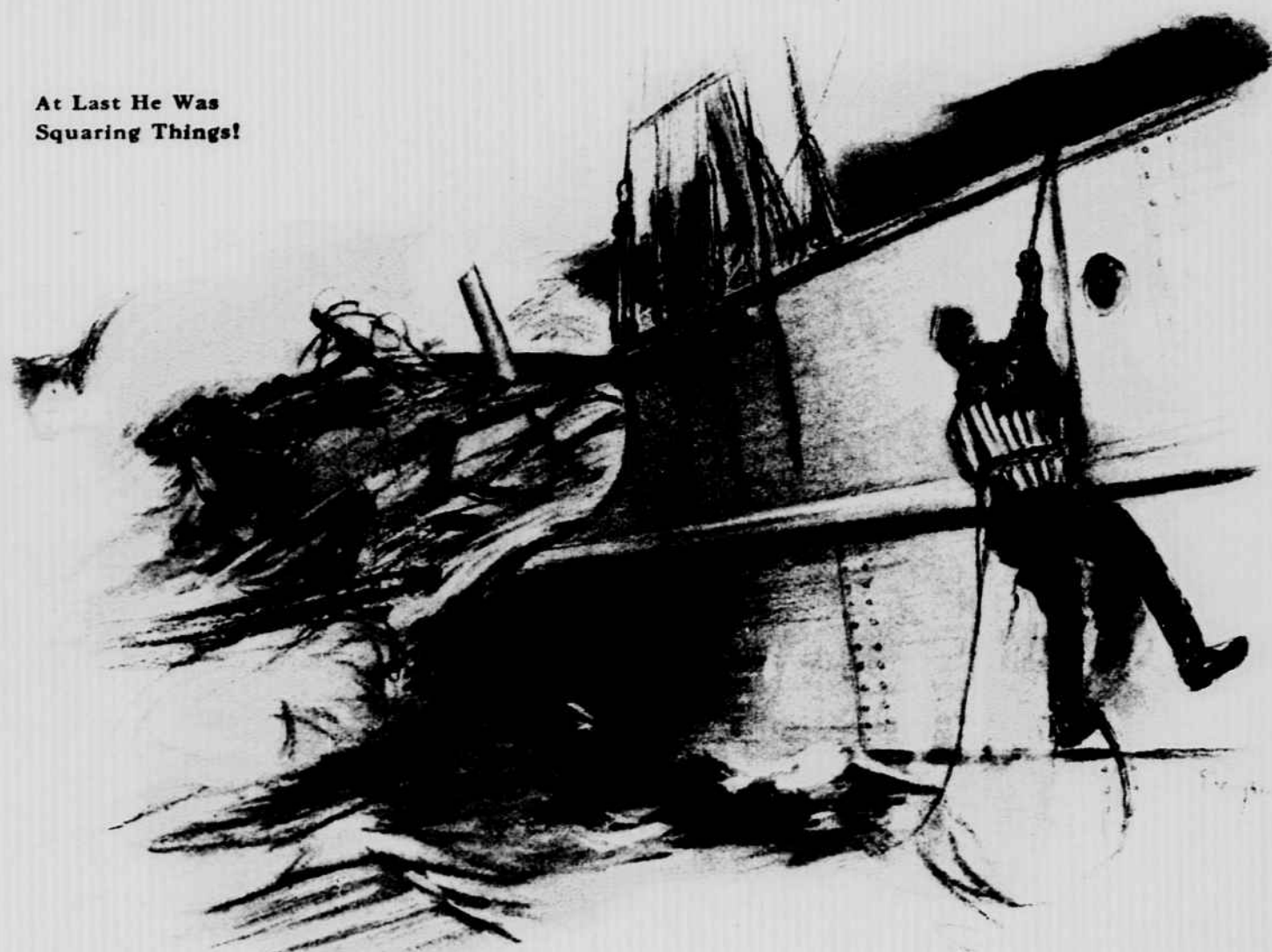
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THE BEACHCOMBER

Drawings by George Wright

BY S. TEN EYCK BOURKE AND CHARLES FRANCIS BOURKE

At Last He Was
Squaring Things!



IN TWO PARTS—PART II.

IT seemed improbable, too much like dire fatality. Sister ships seeking the same suicidal death on the same rocks. But Shark Gascoigne had seen five deep-watermen piled up on the Ships Graveyard at the same time, thrown inshore by the same savage storm. "The Mindora, and now the Mystic Belle!" He recalled the little gray shipmaster's appeal,—his "missus an' the kid!" The beachcomber shivered as one in an ague. "Don't let 'em hurt 'em! The pore little kiddy." And Ships Bottom Life Station crippled for good! "The bullies couldn't put overboard the boat to save 'em!"

He was on the sands, running now, unhampered by seaboots or extra clothing, just as he had come down from the city that afternoon. The thick wallet was still in his breast pocket,—the price of evil deeds,—but he had forgotten that long ago. Only the memory of the evil remained, and for that, subconsciously almost, he determined to make reparation—if they'd only let him!

Once in the open, clear of the bluffs, he had a good view of the ocean, flinging wild on the teeth of the incoming blow. The huge sheep clouds against the blue-black sky gave down a refracted shimmer like twilight. Far ahead he could see the Ships Bottom men working at their boat. At the same moment he glimpsed the lost ship, far out on the outer shoals, her nose high in the air. Then the mist hid her. He struggled on. "That was her I heard! She was right in line for the shoals when they sighted her! An' she hit 'em! Yep, she's high and tight!"

He saw the water lift offshore, and threw himself on the sand. When the squall passed, he saw the vessel again,—a three-sticker, he could make out, like the Mindora, wallowing in a perfectly white welter of water, almost straight out from Ships Bottom Station. The blast that threw him down had thrown her on her beam ends. As he looked he saw two of the masts crumple, as though that part of the ship had dissolved

beneath them. "She'll stand up awhile now," he told himself; "but there'll be a awful lumber yard comin' inshore pretty soon—if she don't all come in!"

At Ships Bottom Station a corporal's guard of life savers were doing their best to drive the surfboat into the rollers that flung her back at every attempt. As Gascoigne plodded up, he saw Big Jem Casco himself sprawled out under the bow of the boat, wallowing in sand and wash.

"This time you're down an' out for good! It's another man's job," the beachcomber said, and his voice had a triumphant ring.

Single handed he dragged the life Captain out of the sand of the sea. "Lemme take her out, Jem," he said. "I'll take 'em off. We got five men left. I'll get the skipper's kid—"

"We got!" Casco checked a groan, to glare up at the hard face working with emotion that stared down at him. "Well, I like your bloody nerve!"

"Oh, stow it, Jem—tonight anyway!" Gascoigne flared, raging. "You know I'm as good a boatman as you, a'most. Gimme the chance, won't ye, Jem? She won't last an hour, that hooker. She's half gone a'ready. There'll be a lumber yard ashore presently—"

"Want to make good, do ye, Shark Gascoigne?" The big life Captain kept his grim gaze on him as he got up, swaying. "Well—"

The crew crowded round, fearful of Casco's safety, the little gray shipmaster with them, crying out for his wife and baby, "dying out there in the dark!"

"Ye hear that, Jem Casco?" Gascoigne said savagely. "In the dark. A little kiddy—an' a woman! W're's the life jackets, Jem?"

"Take mine," Casco said. "We're a size. Here, rip her off and git! A battleship couldn't get through in twenty minutes. On'y don't ye come back without 'em, Shark Gascoigne! You hear me?"

Gascoigne heard, and the words were music in his ears. He dashed for the capsized boat, feeling in him

the strength to right and launch her with his own single arm. Some stragglers from the village, who had won their way over the trestle, joined the surfmen, and among them the surfboat was again hauled back and mounted on the sand wagon for a flying start into the surf. With three men inboard, buckled to the thwarts, and Gascoigne at the steering oar, she struck out through an open space in the wreckage that hurtled shoreward, flailing the beach like great clubs.

Once fairly in the water, the rest of the boat crew tumbled over the side, and Gascoigne, his head in the clouds and the twenty-foot steering sweep in his iron grip, swung the boat slantwise with the gale, heading out for the wreck of the Mystic Belle.

"Han'some does it, Bullies! Jump her! We'll get the kid, an' the missus too! Hang the paint!" The beachcomber's voice rung joyously over the boom of the gale.

"An' hang me!" Little Welsh grunted, as he tugged at his bow oar. "Hang me if I ever thought us Gov'-ment pie biters 'ud ever be skippered by a bloomin' ex-beachcomber, wice Cap Casco with a busted arm!"

Gascoigne heard and laughed aloud. "D'ye hear 'em out there, Lads? The pore kiddy's cryin' in the dark. For Gawd's sake pull yore heart out!"

"W'at 're we doin' now? Must think we're hydraulic pumps," the stroke oar gasped. "I never see so much timber. A man could walk dryshod to Europe on this sea!"

All around them the wreckage of the broken ship came tumbling in. A great beam shooting up from the deep hovered half over them and fell with a mighty splash into the water alongside.

"Pass'ngers fer Kingdom Come!" Welsh yelled with a laugh. "Next 'un'll snakehead us through the bottom."

"They can't kill us, Boys! We'll get 'em! We'll get 'em!" On the stern thwart Gascoigne balanced, a gigantic figure in his ribbed cork jacket, staring ahead, as though the power of his will alone could drag the boat to the wrecked ship. The sea tossed the incoming wreckage as a child tosses jackstraws. Once, in a mass of sodden canvas, they had to stop and cut their way through with knives, Gascoigne beating at it with his twenty-foot sweep in insensate fury till it swept astern.

Then, as he saw the open water ahead, out of the chaos of fury in his brain the resourceful man emerged, cool and unconquerable. That the surfboat would live through that terrible flailing none of the life savers believed possible. Gascoigne brought her through, battered and leaking; but the lifemen were not there to calculate chances. Undermanned as the boat was, the big beachcomber had instilled his spirit into them, and no man swerved for a moment from the conviction of success.

Discipline played no part in the big beachcomber's creed; but the influence of a master man, untrained and untrammelled, accomplished what no discipline could do. The wind cut them like knives, they were covered with salt spume and ice; but no man faltered. Gascoigne's head was bare. He had not even stopped to put on oilskins. His hands burned to the shank of the oar. His body was in a turmoil of hurry; but his soul was at peace.

SUDDENLY the boat shot through the wrack into the open water. A hundred yards away the Mystic Belle pounded on the rock shoals—what was left of her. All round the wreck and the submerged reef the sea churned white with spars and wreckage and sailcloth, all that once pertained to a well found ship. As they closed in, a sodden hatch cover lifted under them, nearly capsizing the boat; but the patent chambers emptied her almost as quickly as she filled. Strapped to the thwarts the life savers laughed jeeringly. "Can't kill us, Honey!" they chortled. Gascoigne, balancing on the stern thwarts with no safeguard but his own strength and skill, evoked the admiration of even the scoffing Welsh. "Looks like the bloomin' beachcomber was savin' up for something, eh, Yank?" he said to No. 2. "I b'lieve he'd scull her through himself."

"Girl," said Yankee Evans laconically. "He's a first chop man, Shark is."

The cry of triumph that greeted the passing of the

boat from the wrack-strewn surf was not taken up by Gascoigne. Standing high over the others, he saw that which told him that the worst of their work lay before them. The Mystic Belle lay in irons, hard and fast on the submerged shoals, broadside to the wind. Only her after mast was standing. The rest of the ship had crumbled away, from 'midships forward. To leeward, the only way they could approach her, the sea was impassable. As the boat shot close in, impelled by the iron muscles of the life savers, Gascoigne saw under the refraction of the fleecy clouds something that made him forget the torture of the cold and the heartbreaking toil.

"There's on'y two of 'em on the after house, an' the woman and the kid—she's got him," he told the crew. "The others must a tried off in the boat. She's got the little kiddy bundled in a shawl—I can see 'em plain."

The words were spoken simply, even casually; for, with the desperate work toward, Gascoigne was keeping himself in check. But a sort of groan went up from the boat.

"We'll never win through that mess," Welsh said. "If I on'y had my gun I could shoot a line over 'em, an' rope-dance 'em over that timber yard. W'at's to do now?"

"Couldn't make it with ary line gun, Welshy," Gascoigne said. "Can't ye see the windward shrouds on that mast are almost frayed through? And them two fellows are froze, from looks."

Instinctively every man turned to stare at the ship. The boat was on the edge of the wreckage. Long Johnson, the stroke oar, looked up with set face.

"I reckon you know what that means, Shark?" he said. "A big sea'll send that mast a whanging atop of us. And she'll split the stern o' that ship when she goes. What?"

Gascoigne had thought of that. "We got to hustle," he said briefly.

THE very weight of the wind had cleared the sky until snatches of moonlight shone through, illuminating the wreck. The after part of the ship that held three lives and the beginning of a life was fast breaking up on the shoals. And they were barred from that part by twenty yards of wreckage—death to any boat to venture into. Gascoigne, weighing the chances as they lay to, saw that if these lives were to be saved another man must take his life in his hands.

"Swing her under the heel, Bullies!" he shouted. "Out o' the ruck! As you go now! Swing her round! Belay! An' stand by to ketch 'em!"

"Gives us orders like a bloomin' port Admiral, 'e do, that ex-beachcomber!" Little Welsh said delightedly. The men had taken the measure of their man.

The crew lay on their oars. Gascoigne hitched the ribbed life preserver well up on his mighty chest and knotted the end of the lifeline in the steel eye. Then, when the sea receded, he caught up the end of the lifeline and leaped far out toward the wreck, seeking to win through the open spaces to the ship.

Twice he made the attempt, and twice they hauled him back battered and bruised, but with his courage high in him. At last he was "squaring things"! A third time he plunged into the sea and struck out for the hulk. They saw him make the wreckage, disappear, and come up close to the wreck, where he put forth all his great strength to hold on and clamber up the side.

"Dived under it, by crickets," Welsh gasped, "cork weskit an' all!"

The two men on the cabin hatch had seen the lifeboat, and Gascoigne gave a cry of satisfaction as, wallowing aft waist deep in the scuppers, clearing his blinded eyes from the salt crust, he saw them weakly casting them-

selves loose, struggling against the lethargy that had almost overcome them. Useless he knew they were for his purposes.

"Go overboard on the end of a line!" he shouted. "The lifeboat will pick you up. An' ye might ha saved me a swim if I thought you was that game!" he murmured through his set teeth.

They were lucky if they got overboard without his help. But Gascoigne had more important business to attend to,—the woman and the baby. Crawling to the cabin skylight, he drew his sheath knife and cut the lashings that held the woman. She did not move, not even to lift her closed eyelids; but the baby was locked in her arms as in a vise.

"Knocked out, scared, or cold—or both," Gascoigne muttered, heartsick himself at her colorless face. Had he come too late, after all?

A faint wail coming from the bundle in the shawl brought a lump to his throat. "It is darn tough, ain't it, Kiddy?" he said, apostrophizing the unseen baby. "I don't dare send you off with your ma, though. You'd get your little foots wet, sure pop." Cautiously, carefully, his clumsy hands withdrew the little bundle, and he tucked it in the breast of his peajacket, buttoning it securely in, against his own hard-thumping chest.

His big cork jacket he made fast to the mother, as well as he could for its immense size.

"If they carried more o' these things on coastin' hookers more folks 'ud come home," he said impersonally. Freeing the lifeline from his body, he made it fast to the woman. Then with a wave and a shout of warning to the boat he lowered her over the side. "She'll wash down all right, an' they'll grab her," he said, with full confidence in the boat crew. He saw her whirl to leeward, and he saw the lifeboat intercept her and lift her aboard, and he drew a deep breath of relief. "And that's all right. Now you an' me, Kiddy!" He tried to cave in his big chest to give the little thing in his peajacket "sea room."

So engrossed was he that he paid no attention to the weather to windward. The wild winds had swept the clouds away out of a clean-washed sky, and suddenly, low down on the horizon, the moon shone out with the splendor of day. And now, as he waited impatiently for Little Welsh to heave back the lifeline, a big sea reared its head alongside the ship. He saw it coming, and he jumped for the mizzen shrouds. The water fell with the report of a cannon, the hulk quivered, and the leeward deck and bulwark crumpled like paper, carrying with it the two seamen. He saw the lifeboat, watchful as a terrier, dash into the open again, and presently return to her position to leeward. Whether they got the men or not he did not know. Just then he did not much care. "They're not much, anyway, leavin' you an' me to fight it out in the wet, eh, Kiddy?" he said in whimsical disgust.

He saw Welsh rise in the bow of the lifeboat, swinging a lifeline, ready for the cast.

"Make fast your long painter and stand by to haul taut!" Gascoigne shouted. "Gawd ain't a goin' to let 'em ketch them scow bunkers an' leave us aboard, Kiddy," he said. It was no part of Shark Gascoigne's ethics to moralize, in thought or word. Simply from a looter of dead ships, he had taken to saving life, and he liked the sensation. "Never had so much fun in my life!" he chuckled, unable to analyze his own feelings.

In calling for the lifeboat's inch-and-a-half towing rope, he had already planned his means of escape from the hulk—"without the kid ketchin' cold too." If that shaky after mast would stand the pounding of that big sea, it would stand any strain that he meant to put on it.

"If on'y I kin get the rope fast up there, an' the stick holds half a minute, I'll come down hand under hand

The kid won't know but what he's in bed— My Gawd!"

EVEN as he spoke, hauling in the lifeline with careful haste, the after part of the ship rose and fell and split in two halves like a sliced cake. Surely, inevitably, the ship squattered on the shoals. The deck seemed to dissolve under his feet with grim deliberation, as though to let him face the death he was going to meet, the single windward shroud parted, the mast swept over the side with a mighty splash.

Paralyzed with terror such as he had never felt for himself, Gascoigne stood like a stone man. So, for all his hard work, for all his chosen repentance, this was the cruel end! He was going to lose out! He wasn't going to have the chance to make good, after all! For an instant his thoughts flung abroad, across the bay to the Barnegat waterfront; then he swung both great arms round the baby—a bulwark from harm. "Pore little kiddy," he murmured.

As though in consonance with imminent disaster, the baby's smothered whimper rose to a wail. Like a blow in the face it dispelled the lethargy that gripped the beachcomber's senses. His great jaw set tight. "I'm darned if the pore kid loses out!" he growled. "W'at's water? Caint I swim? Standin' here like a great booby hen waitin' to be choked, w'en the pore kid wants its ma! An' I said he ain't a goin' to get wet—an' he ain't!"

It was a superhuman task the big beachcomber set himself, to swim the half cable length that separated him from the lifeboat now, driven back by the downpouring of wreckage from the riven ship. But there was no other help to hope for now. It was a case of "swim and keep the baby dry." With the feel of the squirming little body close to his heart, Shark Gascoigne was ready to meet a cyclone and swim into the heart of it. "Cur'us I most fluked, till he bawled," he said, surprised at himself.

He marked a big black sea coming in—the final ship killer. He slipped out of his peajacket, still watching the sea, and wrapped up the baby bundle. Then, when the sea lifted the remains of the hulk, he plunged downward into the maelstrom of water and wreckage.

With one arm high up in the air, holding his precious burden, he swam, striking out for the blur that was the lifeboat, swimming almost waist high in his frantic endeavors to keep the child from harm. He had been battered and bruised beyond the endurance of a less powerful man coming out to the ship: in that mass of timbers and debris he was grueled on the wrack going back. The broken planks and spars ground against his mighty ribs, raking him from shoulder to loin. His breath came in agonized gasps. Still he held the baby high, swimming with one hand, the long reaching stroke of the Barnegat baymen. He was blinded by salt and cold; but his steel muscles did not waver. "We'll make it, Kiddy," he said, consoling the high-held bundle. "Air yo' warm, Son?"

A following spar took him between the shoulders. It was the paralyzing blow that sent everything black; but something had loomed up ahead, high, white, and sharp bowed, pounding down upon him. A man hung over the bow of the lifeboat, and Gascoigne, in a last torturing effort, heaved up the baby to him.

"Ketch, Welshy!" he gasped. "I'm goin' under!"

THREE or four caved ribs, a busted fin, and a cracked block—w'at excuse 'ave you got for livin'?"

It was Little Welsh bending over the bandaged beachcomber at Ships Bottom station, with a look of admiring affection on his gnarled face. Behind him crowded the life crew, Captain Casco towering over them smiling as he nodded his complete satisfaction.

"He'll do now," the Captain said.

Gascoigne, come back from the darkness of oblivion, saw that in the faces of the crew that brought a sigh of content. "So I done it, after all!" he said. "The kiddy's safe, ain't he, an' dry?"

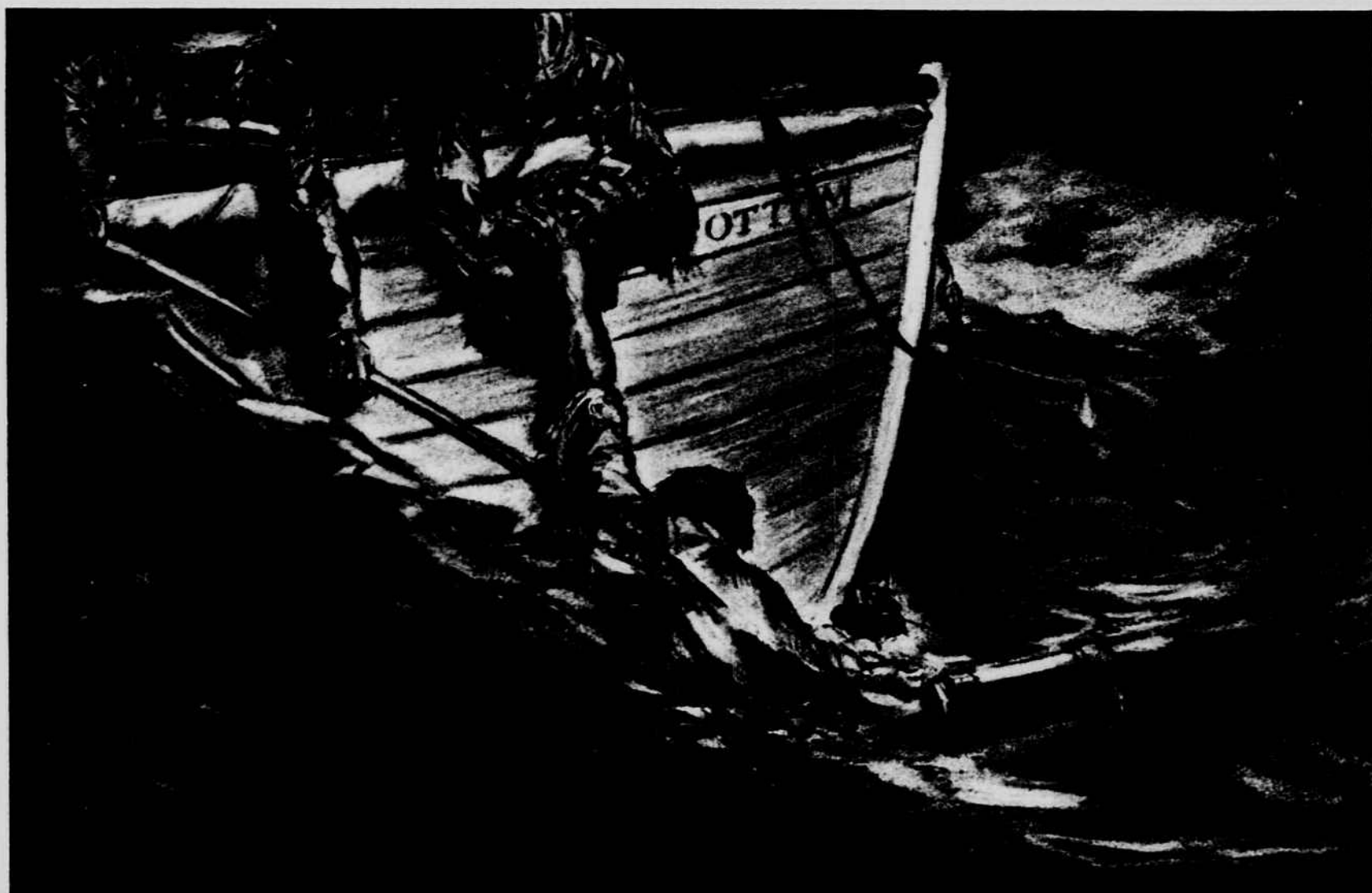
Welsh dandled the bundled up baby before him. Its little arms in the blanket were full of all the strange things the life savers had collected and pressed upon him. "Caught 'im on the fly," the little life saver said. "That sure was a good throw of yours, Shark! The missus? Oh, we got her all right, an' them two scowbankers that come off unexpected. The boat bunch blew in at Harvey Cedars. We got 'em all!" the gunfirer said triumphantly.

"Me?" Gascoigne said, still dazed with his return from the shades.

"Oh, Joe boathooked you, not thinkin' you of much account. Thought you was a bloomin' porpoise, you did, goin' wisitin' to Davy Jones: on'y Bronson fooled you. That's w'at I call pure, onadulterated gen'rosity in Joe," the life saver grinned.

"Now I s'pose you'll be wantin' to join the Life too?" It was Captain Casco who spoke, with admiring appraisal of the indomitable strength and courage of the beachcomber. "If you do, Shark, one of the boys is stove up too bad for more work this year."

Shark Gascoigne managed to laugh; though the pain was that of the rack. "No, Jem, I'm goin' to stick to straight fishin' after this. Gives a fellow more time to home—his own home," he said, a flush mounting his battered face. "Cordin' to my notion, ivy-covered cottages beat life stations over an' back. Lemme hold the baby, will ye?"



"Ketch, Welshy!" He Gasped. "I'm Goin' Under!"